

and museum exhibitions and symposiums. The far side of the house has been stripped down and painted. And I'm told again by the historians that this is the first time that the building has been taken down to its original stone.

The celebration also includes a commemorative postage stamp, which is what brings us here this afternoon. And I thank everyone who worked so hard to make this stamp possible, particularly the former Postmaster General Anthony Frank, who authorized it; Jack Ruther, who we just met, who did the superb design. And I hope the stamp serves as a reminder to every American that this place is truly the people's house.

One of the things I enjoy the most is taking our foreign visitors over here when the tours are on. And I'll never forget the reaction when I introduced a monarch to the visiting tourists coming through here. And one of the kids started yelling, "It's a real live king, Dad. It's a real live king." [Laughter] And it was a good experience for the real live king to see how the people

consider this properly their house.

One of the great blessings of the Presidency, obviously, is to live within the walls of this house, to roam its hallways, to absorb its history, and to be reminded at every turn of the noble men who have lived here and of their families. But a President can never, obviously, be more than a caretaker or a tenant in this house, for the White House belongs, as it has for 200 years, to every American.

And we are very grateful, Barbara and I both. And we pray that God continues to bless this house as He blesses the United States of America. Thank you all very much for coming. And now, Mike, do the honors.

[At this point the stamp was unveiled.]

That concludes our brief ceremony, but thank you all very much for coming.

Note: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Acting Postmaster General Michael S. Coughlin.

Remarks to the Forum of the Americas

April 23, 1992

Please be seated. And David, thank you, sir. And thank you for your really vital work in rallying the private sector and congressional support for the North American free trade agreement, for the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. And let me say to his many friends here that David's personal involvement has been a major factor in the success we've enjoyed so far with both of these significant initiatives. And I also want to pay my respects to another old friend, Ambassador George Landau of the Americas Society, and Antonio Del Valle of the Business Council of Latin America, and Tom d'Aquino of the Business Council on National Issues. And I am grateful for all your leadership.

I understand also—and I can't see too well out here with these bright lights—that somewhere out there sits an old friend, a former colleague at the United Nations who

went on to greater heights than being an ambassador there, an old friend, Javier Perez de Cuellar, is with us. And I am just delighted that he could be here. And I just wish I could see him. Javier? There he is.

And may I particularly welcome all of our guests from south of the Rio Grande, leaders from both the public and the private sectors. I see several ambassadors here and many others that are in the Government sector but so many from the private sector. And we salute you for your leadership. And let me just say this: Public or private, from the United States, we are glad to be your partners.

And I can't think, really, of a more important moment than now to convene again this Forum of the Americas. Over the last 3 years, we've seen our world literally transformed: the Berlin Wall torn down and

Germany peacefully unified, the people of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union liberated from communism, and South Africa's historic vote to reject apartheid. And we've seen Arab neighbors negotiating for the first time face to face with Israel, and a worldwide coalition under the banner of the United Nations stand up and turn back Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. And there's been a profound change with meaning for every man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth. And we have drastically reduced—and this is one I take great pleasure in having been a small part of—we have drastically reduced the threat of nuclear war.

And just today, the United States took steps to facilitate trade in high technology goods, an initiative made possible by the changed strategic environment and the peaceful rebirth of freedom in the formerly Communist lands. We relaxed trade restrictions on exports that served us well during the cold war era but are no longer necessary in our new world. And our actions today will eliminate requirements for thousands of export licenses, including many that affected computers, one of our strongest export earners. Trade covered today by today's de-regulation amounts to about \$2.5 billion.

Here in our own hemisphere, the Americas have launched an era of far-reaching and hopeful change. We've made history, all of us. We're well on our way to creating something mankind has never seen, a hemisphere wholly free and democratic, with prosperity flowing from open trade.

From Mexico City to Buenos Aires, that vision is becoming a reality. For the first time in many years, more private capital is flowing into the Americas for new investments than is flowing out. In country after country, the hyperinflation that literally devastated the region's economies, particularly its poor, has been halted. In nearly every nation, real growth has returned. A growing number of nations are taking advantage of the Brady plan, an important initiative of our administration designed to reduce the debt burden on our neighbors and set the stage for the renewal of growth. Barriers to trade and investment are coming down. Go to the financial centers of the world, and you'll get the same message: One of

the most exciting regions for investment is Latin America.

Alongside this economic revolution, we have witnessed and played a vital role to shape a political revolution just as powerful. Two years after we initiated Operation Just Cause, Panama has replaced the repression of the Noriega era with freedom and democracy. In El Salvador, after 12 years of civil war, our consistent efforts have brought peace. In Nicaragua, we succeeded in our goal of restoring peace and democracy through free elections. And throughout Central America, civilian presidents hold office, and the principle of consent of the governed is now firmly established. And in South America, Chile and Paraguay have re-joined the community of democracies.

This peaceful revolution throughout the Americas did not happen by accident. It is the work of a new generation of courageous and committed democratic leaders with whom we have worked closely in pursuit of common goals, those leaders supported by this dynamic private sector that is so beautifully represented here tonight.

The new spirit was demonstrated in June of last year, when the OAS General Assembly passed a resolution designed to strengthen the international response to threats to democracy. Consolidating this revolution will not be easy; we understand that. Millions of people in our hemisphere are still mired in poverty and political alienation. Recent events in Haiti, Venezuela, and Peru remind us that democracy is still fragile and faces continued dangers. In all our nations, powerful special interests cling to old ideas and privileges, promote protectionism. They resist expanded trade.

For the diehards, for Castro's totalitarian regime, for those in the hemisphere who would turn the clock back to military dictatorship, for the stubborn holdouts for economic isolation, I want to make one point clear: Hundreds of millions of Latin Americans share a faith in human freedom and opportunity. And I stand with them. And as long as I am President of this great country, the United States will devote its energies to the true and lasting liberation of the people of the Western Hemisphere.

Sharing the democratic spirit makes a difference on every issue we care about. Democracy's rebirth led Argentina and Brazil to join hands to halt the spread of nuclear arms. Democracy energized Brazil to slow deforestation of the Amazon rain forest. Democracy gave Argentina the will to stop the Condor ballistic missile program financed by Libya and Iraq. Colombia's democracy is leading the fight against the drug trade and working to restore its economic vitality. The restored democracy in Panama has passed tough new laws to combat money laundering, and it's working to renew its importance as an East-West trade corridor.

Make no mistake: Political and economic freedom are linked; they are inseparable. And just as people have a God-given right to choose who will govern them, they also must be free to make their own economic choices. When we lift barriers to economic freedom within and among our countries, we unleash powerful forces of growth and creativity.

Before I leave office I want manufacturers in Cleveland to enjoy virtually the same access to markets in Monterrey as they now have in Minneapolis. And with new technologies, creators of services in Denver may be able to tap markets in Santiago as readily as those in Chicago. I'll work to assure that Government protection and excessive regulation don't stand in their way. To do this, we'll have to overcome the stunted vision of some special interests. And I am determined that we can and will do exactly that.

I've made it a top priority to conclude a free trade agreement designed to remove all tariffs on trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. This agreement will build on our historic free trade agreement with Canada. The success of the agreement with Canada demonstrates how free trade can benefit all concerned.

We cannot achieve this breakthrough by equivocating between the status quo protectionists and the movement for freedom and change. Some suggest that we can hide in a cocoon of protection and pretend still to benefit from the fresh air of competition. Well, if there's ever an audience that understands this, you and I know that is simply wrong-headed. Our economic future must not depend on those who pay lip service

to free trade but full service to powerful special interests. We cannot have it both ways.

In our own War for Independence, those who took this kind of stand were known as the "summer soldiers." And they wanted the glory of the revolution without showing the gumption to stand for freedom even in tough times. Our stand is clear; my stand is clear: Open trade is vital to this country, to the United States, and every bit as vital as domestic reforms to renew our system of education, health care, Government, and administration of justice.

A free trade area comprising the United States, Mexico, and Canada would be the largest market in the entire world: 360 million consumers in a \$6 trillion, \$6 trillion economy. Mexico—and I salute its President, its business people here tonight—Mexico is among the fastest growing national markets for U.S. exports today. And over the last 3 years alone, American merchandise exports to Mexico have increased by two-thirds, two-thirds. Our exports of autos, auto parts, telecommunications equipment to Mexico have doubled. And while members of this audience may be aware of this, I doubt it is widely known in the United States that two-thirds of all imports into Mexico come from the United States.

It's not just the border States that profit from this growth. During my Presidency, 45 of our 50 States have increased their exports to Mexico. Our top 10 exporters to Mexico today include Michigan, Illinois, New York, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Ohio, as well as Texas, California, and Arizona, those border States.

Trade with Mexico already supports hundreds of thousands of U.S. jobs. And just as an example: Thousands of good jobs in Warren, Ohio, and Rochester, New York, depend on sister plants in Mexico to keep their products competitive. A North American free trade agreement would create thousands more. It would create competitive efficiencies and economies of scale that will help American companies compete in world markets.

Free trade with Canada and Mexico will make all of us winners in economic endeavor, but our relationship goes well beyond

trade. We share borders that span the continent. We're linked by centuries-old ties of family and culture. I share a warm friendship with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of Canada, whom I consult frequently. I count President Carlos Salinas also as a dear friend. And he and I have been promoting the "spirit of Houston" ever since our summit meeting just after both of us were elected in 1988. And both President Salinas and Prime Minister Mulroney are bold and imaginative leaders, and I am committed to working with them to forge enduring friendship among our countries based on open trade, cooperation, and mutual respect.

Now, you may have heard some suggest that politics will dictate delaying the North American free trade agreement until after the election. Well, let me say this: These voices are not speaking for me. The time of opportunity is now. I have instructed our negotiators to accelerate their work. I believe we can conclude a sound, sensible deal before the election. I want to sign a good agreement as soon as it is ready. And there will be no delay because of American politics.

Now, to other friends here let me say this: The North American free trade agreement is only a beginning. Our Enterprise for the Americas Initiative already has made noteworthy progress to open markets, expand investment flows, reduce official debt, and strengthen the environment throughout the hemisphere.

The Enterprise for the Americas Initiative reflects a revolution in thinking. Through this initiative, the United States is not seeking to impose our ideas on our neighbors. Rather, our program is designed to empower them to succeed with free market economic reforms they've chosen on their own, ideas developed in Latin America for Latin Americans.

The courageous Latin American leaders who are reforming their economies and breaking down barriers to trade and investment need our support. And they are the true liberators of our era. True success will mean opening up statist systems formerly rigged to protect wealthy elites and closed to working people and the poor. Free market reforms will banish burdensome regulations that now prevent the urban poor from

starting new businesses or *campesinos* from gaining access to credit and title to their land. Economic reform must also include honest government. Corruption is the enemy of both growth and democracy. New investment will flow only where the rule of law is secure, the courts are fair, and bidding processes are open to all.

To support reformers, to realize the hopeful new vision in Latin America, the United States Congress must meet its responsibility. I asked Congress to take long overdue action, to invest \$310 million in this fiscal year under the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative. With this, we could write off more than \$1 billion in the hemisphere's official debts and generate millions of dollars to preserve the environment. But regrettably, Congress has refused to approve any funds for this purpose. Congress apparently doesn't believe in return on investment, but I do. And our truckers and railroad people do. And our auto and electronics makers do, as do our environmental engineers and many, many more.

I have helped persuade our allies in Europe and Japan to contribute nearly two-thirds of a \$1.5 billion fund to help Latin American reformers. This fund, administered by the Inter-American Development Bank, would help people privatize old state enterprises at the grass roots, with job retraining and small business loans. But Congress has refused to vote a penny for the U.S. share. I will keep on fighting for these vital programs of the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative until Congress demonstrates the vision and fortitude to provide the support they deserve. And if we can invest in the transformation of Eastern Europe and the old Soviet Union, and we must do so, then we can and must invest in the efforts of our closest neighbors on their peaceful road to true liberation and prosperity.

The United States' economic destiny is linked to Latin America's. No army of protectionists can change that. When Latin America suffered its debt crisis of the early eighties, 1980's, we suffered through a corresponding drop in trade. We did. If you don't believe me, ask Caterpillar workers

from Illinois or employees from Cessna in Kansas. Ask them if they suffered when our best customers in Latin America were in crisis.

With the rise of democracy and economic reform, U.S. exports to Latin America have surged by nearly one-third in just 2 years, from \$49 billion in 1989 to \$63 billion in 1991. This is a much faster rate of growth than for our exports to Asia or Europe. It points to the fact that a stable, prosperous Latin America is a natural market for United States goods and services. Strengthening our neighbors' economies will result in more exports and more good jobs for people in the United States.

When any of us speak with our friends outside the Western Hemisphere, we need to assure them as clearly as possible there is nothing exclusionary in our vision of open trade and economic integration in our hemisphere. Our aim is simply to lower barriers to economic freedom within and among the nations of the Western Hemisphere, not, I repeat, not to create any barriers between ourselves and the nations of Africa, Europe, and Asia. All of our aims are consistent with the global policies of GATT.

And I would just like to commend the superb leadership of Arthur Dunkel, GATT's Director General, who spoke to you earlier today. And I want to assure you I urgently want to open up global markets through success with the Uruguay round. We all, all of us from whatever country in the Western Hemisphere, have a stake, a big stake, in a successful conclusion of the Uruguay round of the GATT.

And if the equivocators and the protectionists and the pleaders for the special interests want to debate this, bring them on. I will take the case for increased trade to the people in every corner of the United States of America. And I will make this abundantly clear: Free trade means more exports, more investment, more choices, more jobs for Americans. Our great country is the number one exporter in the world, over \$422 billion last year. Imagine that, \$422 billion. And we intend to pursue trade policies to keep that growth up now and in the future. And we will knock down barriers wherever we find them to open mar-

kets, for instance, for our computer software, movies, books, and pharmaceuticals. We will fight hard against protectionism both at home and abroad.

And five centuries ago, a man of courage and vision set sail from Europe searching for new trade routes and opportunities. And he defied the timid counsel of those who said the Earth was flat. Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas transformed human history. Columbus was an entrepreneur, and the risk he took 500 years ago continues to pay off abundantly today. And today, we still have to combat the flat-Earth mentality, the mind-set that urges us to barricade our borders against competition, to shut off the free exchange of food and machinery and skills and ideas.

But the future does not belong to the status quo. It is the legacy of people like yourselves, people with far-sighted vision and then a spirit of enterprise. The future awaiting the Americas is a time of rediscovery, a time for empowering the poor through new investment, trade, and growth, a time for cultural renewal. Our efforts and the efforts of millions of citizens of the Americas can achieve new gains for honest, democratic, limited government. And together, we can usher in a new order of peace, a new time of prosperity, both animated by personal freedom.

Thank you all very much for what you are doing to strengthen free trade in this hemisphere. And let me say again how grateful I am to David and the other leaders of this wonderful organization for vitalizing and getting that private sector involved in all of these decisions. It is an absolutely essential ingredient if we are going to succeed in a course that is mutually beneficial.

Now, I heard you were having broccoli for dinner, so I'm out of here. Many, many thanks. And may God bless you all.

Note: The President spoke at 8 p.m. at the Sheraton-Washington Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to David Rockefeller, chairman of the Americas Society.